



The Corps Engages: WACs and the Bomb

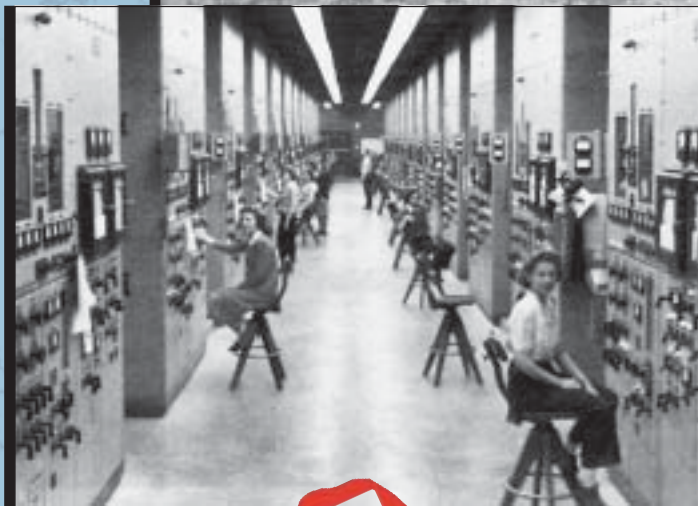
Manhattan District WAC Detachment

THE U.S. government's mission to produce an atomic bomb during World War II was assigned to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in mid-1942. Under the command of BG Leslie R. Groves, the New York City-based Manhattan Engineer District began a construction effort that would include production sites across the United States. While significant numbers of civilian women served at all project sites, most of those assigned to the MED were enlisted soldiers and officers of the U.S. Army.

During World War II, more than 150,000 women served in the Women's Army Corps, and WACs assigned to the Corps of Engineers participated in the Manhattan Project. As early as 1943, female soldiers were brought into the MED to undertake clerical, technical and other administrative work. The need for additional personnel led to the establishment of a Manhattan District WAC Detachment on June 3, 1944. By the end of the war, more than 400 WACs served in the Manhattan District.

The four-year-long research-and-development project, completed at a cost of \$2 billion, was the most expensive U.S. public works effort undertaken to that point. Three atomic bombs were produced by the summer of 1945, all of which were detonated by the end of the war.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Office of History.



Among the tasks assigned to the WACs was operating the calutrons at the Electromagnetic Separation Plant in Oak Ridge, Tenn.



The calutrons required constant attention to keep the ion beam at a maximum.

